2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

the *ubutala* to ward off ants, but more often than not the life of a granary is only two to three years. Nor can rats be kept outside for long.

Filling the granary. All food is dried in the sun before storing. Drying-racks (*icintambi*, plur. *ifintambi*) are built outside each village. These are rough platforms about 6 feet by 2 feet across, raised on uprights 8 feet high, and reached by a notched climbing-pole. On it are piled heads of millet, sorghum, or other crops to be dried before storing. The millet harvest is sometimes put temporarily in a rough field granary (*nkolovo*), usually made of plaited reeds, before it is carried into the village. As the gardens are often eight or more miles from the village, the convenience of this arrangement is obvious. Later the millet is carried into the village by the women in the big round baskets (*umuseke*, plur. *imiseke*) which contain 40 to 50 lb. The roof of the granary is lifted off and each basket is emptied in one at a time, with the appropriate magic of food-preservation (cf. pp. 206–8). When the whole supply of grain has been emptied into the bin, it must be trodden down hard (*ukushindaila*), a process which the natives consider very important for the preservation of their crop. Next, the roof must be raised into position, and the entrance barred with transverse logs.

To take out the grain, the owner leans a primitive ladder of notched logs (*umutanto*, plur. *imitanto*) against the granary, clambers up, removes the barricade across the entrance, squeezes through the narrow aperture, sometimes raising the roof as she does so, and swings herself down into the dark interior of the bin by the platform bars.

Precious seeds or dried legumes are often kept in a clay water-pot (*umutondo*) or gourd, the mouth of the vessel being plastered over with a layer of clay (*ubumashila*). This is apparently an efficient method of storage, and protects all crops except Kaffir corn from rats and insect pests. Another method of storing legumes or ground-nuts is to make one of the grass carriers known as *umubamba* (plur. *imibamba*). It is common to see natives going about the country carrying round egg-shaped bundles of grass tied with a net-work of bark strands, and containing a hundred pounds or so of seeds. The European is at a loss to understand how a ball about 2 feet in diameter can be made of unplaited grass, and how the beans are inserted in the middle. In fact, the method is ingenious. A round or oblong hole about 18 inches across and a

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

garden directly before the millet, a handful or two being scattered widely so that the *sonkwe* heads shoot up here and there among the *amale* about six feet apart. Cassava cuttings are sometimes struck here and there before the millet is sown. The millet seedlings themselves germinate in about six or eight days, and the crop ripens on an average in four to five months. 241

It will be seen that sowing is quite a skilled process among the Bemba, but it is a quick, light task, for a whole *ubukula* can be sown in about an hour.

Fencing the garden. The advantage of the *icitemene* system is that after sowing there is no more work to be done till harvest. The burning so effectually destroys the weeds that the hoeing and re-hoeing, which is the constant burden of many other Bantu women, is quite unnecessary. Nor do the Bemba spend much time watching their millet against birds, although this is very necessary in the case of Kaffir corn. They merely have to guard their gardens against thieving baboons, as the millet ripens, against elephants, or in certain parts of the country, to fence it against wild pigs or various buck. There is no effective protection against raiding elephants, but in parts of the Chinsali and Mpika districts the natives build watching platforms about ten feet high known as *amapangu*, (sing. *ulupangu*) and sit there all night with muzzle-loading guns. Scarecrows of flapping leaves are sometimes hung up to protect gardens against birds or monkeys, and old men still use their bows and arrows on baboons, although with little effect. 'Monkeys are clever like men', the natives say, but luckily they eat maize rather than the staple millet. Traps made with rope nooses concealed in the ground are sometimes set for haartebeest and other big buck. [417]

In the game or pig districts, fences are built (*kupindilo lubao*). Bemba do not fence for aesthetic reasons, and indeed male labour is usually too scarce to allow them to do so for purely economic purposes. In many areas the garden runs right into the bush, the trailing vines of pumpkins straggling into the *mpanga* with that feckless, 'untidy' look which is characteristic of this type of millet cultivation. But most of the chiefs' gardens are fenced for greater safety, and those of commoners in areas where pig and buck are plentiful. The work is delayed till the last possible moment before the millet is ripening, i.e. in February or March. 241 417

To cut a fence for an average-sized *ubukula* is about a month's

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

241
417
291

Harvest. Women reaping the chief's field, Citimukulu, 1934.

A garden fenced against wild animals.

[facing p. 293]

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

241
417
work for a man, and it is extremely hard labour. Stout poles of about five feet high and five inches in diameter are trimmed to a point and sunk in the earth about six feet apart. The intervening spaces are filled with horizontal logs, threaded between the uprights, supported on forks, or tied with bark. The result is a fairly impenetrable wall which can only be entered through a rough gate. But even at this cost of labour a fence is not reckoned to last more than two years. The timber rots with rain and is eaten by white ants. Another difficulty is the fact that only a man can make an *ulubao*. Deserted wives try nowadays to set up a makeshift fence, with one cross-bar between flimsy uprights and leafy branches laid aslant it, but it is inefficient and will only last a month. It is one of the grievances of women whose menfolk are absent that they can rarely find a male relative to build them a fence, even if they have been successful in persuading one to cut them a garden. It is a trouble which is, of course, limited to areas where game is plentiful, but in these the women are sometimes reduced to desperation by constant raids on their millet harvest. Near Kasama I watched from a distance a [152] woman running down a hill-side and up the slope opposite to her village, wailing in short staccato cries as she ran. It was like the lamentation at a funeral ceremony, and people stood aside to watch her as she passed. They explained as an apology for such an unusual display of emotion: 'That is a single woman (*umushimbe*). She is alone. The pigs came to her garden last week, and then the other night, and now to-day. And so her heart has become heavy. She has no more food.' Such conduct contrasts sharply with the usual native stoicism in the face of disaster, but it gives some idea of the pitch of despair to which widowed or deserted women are sometimes brought at the present time, for want of male help in economic tasks.

In other parts of the country the people dig pits with mounds between them round the edge of their *ubukula* instead of making a fence. They laugh and say the pits will not keep the pigs off always, but that they are quick to make. They say the animals are puzzled by the holes and begin to run to and fro and to say, '*Yangwe!* I can't get out!' and so they get discouraged and go away. The Lala system of enclosing a number of small gardens within one fence to save labour (*ukuanse lala*) I only heard of once in the Bemba country at Mungalaba, near Mpika.[1]

[1] Information sent me by Mrs. Gore-Browne.